

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 75

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Joe M. Rodgers of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Joe M. Rodgers of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rodgers was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a native of Bay Minette, Alabama, Joe Rodgers was born on November 12, 1933, to Edwin Nathaniel and Charlotte Cook Rodgers; and

WHEREAS, he graduated from Sidney Lanier High School in Montgomery, Alabama, where he stood as captain of the football team; and

WHEREAS, Joe Rodgers earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Alabama in 1956 and served as a Lieutenant in the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey from 1956 to 1959; and

WHEREAS, after working as a sales manager for the Dixie Concrete Pipe Company for a number of years, Mr. Rodgers founded the general contracting firm, Joe M. Rodgers & Associates Inc., in Nashville in 1966; and

WHEREAS, during his thirteen-year association with the company, Joe M. Rodgers & Associates Inc., grew to become one of the largest construction firms in the country, conducting business in thirty states, with satellite offices in the Netherlands, Greece, and Saudi Arabia; and

WHEREAS, driven by his entrepreneurial vision, Mr. Rodgers sold a majority stake in the company in the late 1970s and moved into real estate development while also founding the merchant banking firm, Rodgers Capital Group; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, Joe Rodgers joined forces with real estate investor Ted Welch and the late entrepreneur Jack Massey to establish American Constructors, Inc., which went on to erect such celebrated Nashville landmarks as the Loews Vanderbilt Hotel, the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Wildhorse Saloon, and the Schermerhorn Symphony Hall; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rodgers exceptional record of business achievement encompassed a number of successful enterprises of which he was also involved, including American Endoscopy Services, JMR Investments, The RCF Group, Rodgers Business Interests, Ltd., Rodgers Capital Corporation, Rodgers Capital International, Inc., and Rodgers Properties, Ltd.; and

WHEREAS, he was also a founder and first president of the Tennessee Chapter of the Associated Builders and Contractors, later serving as its national president and director; recognized for his outstanding professional acumen, Joe Rodgers was named Man of the Year by the Tennessee Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers and was in the first class of inductees into the Alabama Engineering Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rodgers began his political involvement in the 1970s, serving as the finance co-chairman for Lamar Alexander's gubernatorial campaigns in 1974, 1978, and in 1982; and

WHEREAS, venturing onto the national political stage in 1976, Joe Rodger served as Tennessee finance chairman for Ronald Reagan's 1976 presidential primary campaign against President Gerald Ford, and later, from 1979 through 1981, served as the national finance chairman of the Republican National Committee; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, Mr. Rodgers was appointed by President Reagan to the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, on which he served from 1981 to 1985, when he was named to a four-year post as United States ambassador to France; and

WHEREAS, among his many diplomatic achievements, Joe Rodgers was instrumental in eliminating the double taxation of U.S. businesses and residents in France and in the successful mediation between political rivals former French Presidents Francois Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac; and

WHEREAS, his ambassadorial accomplishments earned him the rank of Commandeur of the Order of Arts and Lettres from the French government, and President Mitterrand personally awarded Joe Rodgers the rank of Grand Officier of the Legion of Honor; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, Governor Ned McWherter, in cooperation with the General Assembly, appointed Mr. Rodgers as Ambassador to Europe for Trade and Economic Development, and he also served as a member of the Investment Policy Advisory Committee to the United States Trade Representative from 1989 to 1993; and

WHEREAS, following his return from France, Mr. Rodgers served on the Boards of Directors of a great many public companies, including AMR Corporation, which is the parent company of American Airlines, Baccarat, Inc., BellSouth Telecommunications, Berlitz International, Inc., Gaylord Entertainment Co., Gryphon Holdings Inc., Lafarge Corporation, Medical Properties of America, Inc., Pricor, Inc., SunTrust Bank, Thomas Nelson Inc., Towne Services, Inc., Tractor Supply Company, and Willis Corroon PLC; and

WHEREAS, a man of solid faith and deeply-rooted conviction, Joe Rodgers gave of his time, energy, and finances to a variety of admirable organizations, including the Salvation Army, the Middle Tennessee Council of Boy Scouts of America, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the American Cancer Society, the American Red Cross, Brentwood Academy, the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, the Nashville Area Junior Chamber of Commerce, Teen Challenge, Faith Family Medical Clinic, Girl Scouts USA, Project 714 (now known as STARS), Tennessee European Economic Alliance, Vanderbilt Eskind Diabetes Center, Vanderbilt University, and the YMCA Foundation; and

WHEREAS, he was also influential in the leadership Sister Cities of Nashville, Tennessee Family Institute, which is an affiliate of Focus on the Family, and Shepherd Financial Services Inc., and served as Chairman of the 1979 Middle Central South Billy Graham Crusades, the Nashville Coalition Against Pornography, and the Gambling Free Tennessee Alliance; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rodgers also served on the Boards of Directors of the American and Foreign Christian Union, Inc., The Battle of Normandy Foundation, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, Inc., the Institute for Contemporary Studies, the National Law Center for the Protection of Children and Families, and The National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Joe Rodgers was the recipient of an abundance of awards and honors recognizing his remarkable achievements; among these many accolades were honorary Doctor

of Civil Law degrees from the University of Alabama, the University of the South, and Rhodes College, along with The National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame's Distinguished American Award, the first National Exchange Club's American Enterprise Award, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union Key to the Bastille, the Middle Tennessee Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society Silver Hope Chest Award, the Sons of the American Revolution Gold Good Citizenship Medal, the YMCA Youth Legislature Golden Gavel Award, the National ASCE President Award, the Herbert Hoover Medal, the Junior Achievement of Middle Tennessee Free Enterprise Award, the American Red Cross National Fund Raiser of the Year Award, and the Boy Scouts of America Silver Beaver award; and

WHEREAS, in June of 2000, Joe Rodgers was named "Statesman of the Year" by the Tennessee Republican Party and was named one of nine "Leaders of the Century" by Associated Builders and Contractors at the association's fiftieth annual national convention, and from 1989 to 1999, he held the Jennings A. Jones Chair of Excellence in Free Enterprise at Middle Tennessee State University; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rodgers was an active and devout member of Christ Presbyterian Church, which he attended faithfully for many years; and

WHEREAS, he was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Joe Rodgers enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife of fifty-two years, Helen "Honey" Martin Rodgers, and he was the proud father of daughter, Jan Dale, who is married to Bob Dale; and son, Mason Rodgers, who is married to Kelli Rodgers; and

WHEREAS, he will also be sorely missed by his beloved grandchildren, Stuart, Rachel, and Nathan Dale; and Caitlin, Emily, Abigail, Julianne, and Caroline Rodgers; and

WHEREAS, he is further survived by his brother and sister-in-law, Gerry and Peggy Rodgers; and sisters-in-law, Nell Rodgers, Mary Jane Blount, and Anne Pinkston; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rodgers leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Mr. Joe M. Rodgers, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and stalwart dedication to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Rodgers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.